

WHITEWOOD,

Assiniboia, North West Territories, Canada.

Important Information for Tenant Farmers.

A Description of the Settlement, Its Capabilities and Vacant Lands.

By CHARLES MARSHALLSAY, M.N.W.C., and Member of the Board
of Education for the North West Territories.

Situation.—About 250 miles west of Winnipeg and 20 miles west of the boundary of Manitoba and about 90 miles east of Regina, the Capital of the North West Territories, and lying to the north of the Moose Mountains and principally south of the Qu'Appelle River.

Extent.—About 28 Townships, sub-divided into about 4,000 farms of 160 acres each.

Soil.—A black loam, ranging in depth and richness. Alkali beds, very few and small. Boulders crop up through the prairie here and there and are of great service for lining wells and making stone foundations for buildings. A few houses are built of stone. Limestone is found everywhere in small quantities and beds of sand are within reach of every settler. The sub-soil is generally clay, very good bricks are made from the clay found in the low lying lands.

Water.—The Qu'Appelle River crosses the northern part of this district from west to east and is fed by numerous springs from the north and the south the largest one being Scissors Creek which drains a large tract of land to the north of Whitewood. The Pipestone River crosses the centre of the district from west to east and is fed by the Moose Mountain Creek which meanders through the southern part of the settlement. Various small lakes exist, the largest is Round Lake to the north and Weed Lake in the central west. The number of small ponds are innumerable. Sloughs (wet marshes) occur here and there, they are not of great extent but are of great value for the great growth of grass in and around them. wells are sunk all over the settlement at depths varying from 30 to 50 feet.

Timber.—This district was once well wooded but now only about one-third has the advantage of growing timber. The poplar and willow is the common variety. On the north slope of the Moose Mountain and in the

Qu'Appelle Valley poplar logs, large enough for building purposes, can be found, but otherwise the trees are young. Scrub oak, ash, maple and birch are also found side by side with the large trees before alluded to.

Hay.—This district is rich in hay, very long grass is found on the margins of sloughs and in the river bottoms. Cultivated grasses have not been tried here owing to the abundance of natural grass.

Scenery.—The Qu'Appelle Valley is noteworthy for its scenery and the part of it near to Whitewood is specially favored in this respect. The Scissors Creek and the Pipestone Valley and the north slope of the Moose Mountains are worthy of mention.

Seasons.—Since 1882 the seasons have been unfortunate for "grain raisers"; summer frosts have committed devastation here and there all over the country, late crops have been destroyed and early crops affected. The season of 1886 suffered from drought, there was no frost, the sample of wheat raised was excellent, but the crop was small, in some instances nothing. The Whitewood district did not suffer so severely, the trees and richer soil and better cultivation and physical situation afforded many advantages, and copious showers fell now and again.

Climate.—Healthy and bracing, hot in summer and cold in winter. The proverbial "wet June" has not been realized since 1882. The trees bud in May and burst in full leaf in a few days and drop their leaves in October, about as quickly. New grass is high enough to give the cattle a bite by the 1st of June and grows then very fast, the cattle care not for the new grass if they can munch at old grass, the stalks of which are solid and juicy. Winter sets in by the first of November and everything freezes up, the month of November is generally a bad month for locomotion, on some days there is snow and on others there is none, and drivers are at loss whether to use wagons or sleighs. The months of January and February are conspicuous for their dry cold atmosphere which is not uncomfortable, except when a sharp wind blows from the north-west and which pierces everything. Feeding hay to cattle and piling fuel in the stove is then the only occupation. These "cold snaps", rightly so called, for they are "short and sharp", rarely last twenty-four hours, and the calm which follows is both appreciated and enjoyed. By the end of February the winter days are long and light and generally very warm at midday. The winter is liked by everyone. It has never driven a settler away yet. April is the seeding time and all aim to end their seeding within the month. July is the hay harvest, and the latter part of August and beginning of September should see the grain crop harvested.

Fuel.—Up to the present time enough wood for fuel has been obtained in the settlement, and there is yet a little. Coal is brought by the Canadian Pacific Railway both from the east and from the west, and is much lower in price this winter than it has been. It is now 30 shillings a ton. Coal is reported to be found in our district and active operations for boring are being instituted. The immense coal fields, west, will assuredly greatly reduce the price of coal within a short time.

Grain Raising.—The exclusive raising of the cereals has been a failure during the last four seasons. Beautiful wheat, excellent barley, splendid

oats and good flax have been produced, but not on a paying scale. The enemy to success was the summer frost. The promoter of mixed husbandry has not failed to the same extent, he has found a market for his stock and been able to put damaged grain to good use in the feeding of the same. The North West farmer has learned by bitter experience the necessity of good cultivation and early seeding and complete preparation for the same in the autumn. For the grain which is raised, buyers frequent the towns along the line of the Canadian Pacific Railway and during the past winter the Whitewood grain has been sent both east and west. There is a great necessity for a moderately sized flour mill in Whitewood and it is worthy the attention of any practical man of capital to whom this circular may come. Barley is raised very successfully here and its growth is very rapid; this suggests also another industry, the erection of a Brewery in Whitewood; a good supply of water is assured. Oats have always found a ready sale, the supply has never been equal to the demand.

Roads and Bridges.—Good trails exist across the prairie in every direction, surveyed road allowances are mapped out but they have not been strictly followed. The rivers and streams are bridged at convenient points; gratuitous labor on the part of settlers, assisted by money grants from the government, have overcome these obstacles.

Labor.—Has not been a matter of much moment in this district. Farmers generally do their own work and help each other in busy times and work in groups for special purposes, such as threshing, bridge erecting, log house raising, etc., a single man with no stock of his own to care for, often lives during the winter months with a neighbouring family at a nominal rate, or he goes to a distant part where large gangs of men are employed in the woods to get out quantities of heavy timber.

Schools.—The North West Government have a very liberal Act in force respecting elementary Schools; a School district can be formed wherever ten children of ages ranging from 5 to 16 can be found. The district is under the charge of local trustees appointed by the people, and the government grants are such, that the district need not tax the settler over a nominal sum per annum to carry on the school efficiently. The teachers have to be certificated, and the school is annually inspected. School houses are not more than three miles from any settlers residence. There are seven School districts in operation in this locality.

Churches.—The English Church of St. Mary's, Whitewood, has been established since 1883. It is in the diocese of Qu'Appelle and under the charge of the Rev. G. B. Childs, of Moosomin, regular services are conducted by a licensed lay-reader in the clergyman's absence. It is expected that a resident clergyman will be appointed this summer, Church of England Missions are established north and south of Whitewood, and every settler is within easy reach of the services of the Church. The Presbyterian (Knox) Church, Whitewood, is under the charge of the Rev. A. Ogilvie, who has numerous missions established throughout the district.

Society.—Little need be said under this head, for whenever necessity arises or occasion requires or commemoration warrants, the point is always

taken up, and the dance or concert or lecture or meeting or picnic comes off with the greatest success; "every body welcome" is the motto at these gatherings, and very jolly ones they are. Whitewood has its annual race meeting and agricultural show, and takes advantage of "Dominion Day." A cricket club is being organized and promises to be a great success.

Taxes.—No tax, other than a school tax in those districts which are organized, has been assessed in this settlement; no municipal system is in operation, though the bounds of the Whitewood municipality have been marked out.

Building Materials.—All kinds of timber are shipped in, lime is burnt on the spot, and sand is found near by, and bricks are made at Whitewood, stones suitable for foundations can be found everywhere.

Industries.—We lack. A flour mill would do well, a woolen factory has fair prospects, for a number of sheep are now in the district; a brewery should be the market for our barley, and a cheese factory is as essential as a flour mill. To all these opportunities does the writer invite immediate attention.

Stock Raising.—Should be encouraged here for our district is exactly suited for it. We have hay, a fair amount of shelter, and water in abundance, and as it has been shown that mixed farming has a more certain prospect of success than exclusive grain raising, settlers with herds of cattle have done better than the owners of "self binding harvesters." There are now with us three flocks of sheep, two bands of ponies and several herds of horned cattle, and the owners of them are among our most solid settlers.

Railways.—The Canadian Pacific Railway crosses the northern portion of our district. No other line can touch this district for a long time to come. A line will pass within about twelve miles of the north of this district this summer. A passenger train and a freight train going east, and the same class of trains going west, pass Whitewood every day.

Game and Fish.—Wild ducks are very plentiful in wet seasons and the prairie chicken (grouse) are with us all the year round. Rabbits and partridges frequent the woods, and snipe are in the marshes. Now and then a deer comes in sight but very seldom. A species of hare is found in the open prairie. Pike and white fish abound in the larger lakes.

Prairie Fires.—These are a source of danger in sparsely settled districts and where hay and trees abound they create great destruction. They will not cross cultivated land. It is necessary therefore to connect one ploughed field with another by ploughed fire-breaks. To preserve farm houses and buildings and stacks of hay and grain it is imperative that they be placed within an enclosure thus secured, roadways and streams are small checks to the progress of a fire but they are not sufficient when it is driven by a high wind. The fire does not get into a well cultivated and close settlement. A mixed farming and a stock raising country run great risks from these fires; their origin is generally the work of an incendiary or careless person.

Indians.—Large tracts of land called Reserves are now set apart for the use of the several bands of Indians respectively, where under the eye of an Indian agent and a staff of farm instructors, they are engaged in

agricultural pursuits. Occasionally a small party will temporarily leave the reserve for hunting purposes.

The Town of Whitewood.—So called from the poplar trees or "white wood" by which it is surrounded. Mr. Charles Marshall says claims to be the founder of this town. He located on land near it, while the railway station was building, in September, 1882, and he erected a building upon the townsite and began business as a general storekeeper in March, 1883. Since that time the town has steadily grown in size and importance and is now the acknowledged centre of a first rate settlement. At the present time besides the railway premises there are three hotels and boarding houses, three general stores, three livery stables, a harness maker's shop, a flour and grain store, a butcher's shop, a lumber yard (timber yard), a brick yard, and a coal yard. There are also two doctors, a lawyer, three agricultural implement agents and a clergyman. There is a public weighing machine, a post office, a free public school, two churches and a depot for a detachment of the North West Mounted Police. Mail stages leave Whitewood for the north and south every Friday. Whitewood is surveyed into lots and blocks and streets and avenues, good building lots, according to situation can be obtained from \$40 to \$125. Prices of daily wants, in this locality are the same as in Winnipeg or Brandon. A few items will be interesting, Beef, retail, 15c per lb.; Bacon, 12½c per lb.; good Butter, 20c per lb.; Flour, \$2.50 per 100 lbs.; Sugar, 7c per lb.; Tea, 50c per lb.; Coffee, 40c per lb.; Oatmeal, 5c per lb.; a good suit of men's clothes made to order, \$25; a flannel shirt, \$2; a good pair of shoes, \$3; a pair of blankets, \$6; a set of double harness, \$40; a plough, \$21; a wagon, \$60; a cow, \$40; a pony, \$50; a good horse, \$150; a bushel of wheat, 65c; barley, 50c; potatoes, 30c; furniture and crockery are dear.

Taking up Land.—A homesteader should arrive in the country not later than May and enter for land as soon as possible, hire a man and team to plough ten acres and overlook the building of his house himself. Sow oats or barley on the land and plant potatoes in a corner of it. He will thus have a small crop the first year and be able to put up abundance of hay and fix himself securely and also make good preparations for the second year's operations. A man with sufficient capital to buy an improved farm will find buildings ready and land cultivated, but to take advantage of such a position the first of April should see him on his land, for early sowing is a necessity for wheat. Make good frost proof cellars and save abundance of hay, is good advice to a new comer, many old country people find the need of it before they practise it.

Vacant Lands.—And lands available to new comers may be classed under the following heads:—Free Homesteads, Cancelled Lands, Canadian Pacific Railway Lands, Canada North West Land Company's Lands, The Hudson's Bay Company's Lands, Wild Land the property of private persons, and improved farms also the property of private persons.

Free Homesteads.—Section 27 of the Dominion Lands Act, 1883, reads: "Any person, male or female, who is the sole head of a family or any male who has attained the age of eighteen years, shall on making application in the form A in the schedule to this Act, be entitled to obtain homestead entry for any quantity of land not exceeding one quarter section and being

of the class of land open, under the provisions of this Act to homestead entry." A quarter section is 160 acres and the class of land open is every even numbered section, with the exceptions of sections 8 and 26 in every township which belongs to the Hudson's Bay Company. Free homesteads are scattered in this district; they have been culled for four years, the best are not always taken first, for many and various are the circumstances which govern the entering for lands.

Cancelled Lands.—These lands have reverted to the government through the abandonment of the first homesteader. The lands are inspected and improvements, if any, are valued, the number of acres which can be homesteaded free are limited to 80, and the price of the balance of the original homestead is nominally increased. There are a few lands of this class near Whitewood, a common reason for abandoning a homestead is want of capital with which to work it.

Canadian Pacific Railway Lands.—Are as the name implies, the property of the Railway Company and are the balance of the odd numbered sections retained by them in every township. The company sells their land at a very moderate price, and if required, will give easy terms of payment extending over a period of ten years in annual instalments. The price of the Company's land ranges from \$2.50 (10 shillings) to \$8.00 (thirty-three shillings) per acre. A very choice selection of Railway lands can be obtained near Whitewood where an agent of the company resides.

Canada North West Land Company's Lands.—These lands have been selected from the railway lands before alluded to and are supposed to be the cream of the C. P. R. Company's Lands. The price per acre, ranges from \$5 (twenty-one shillings) to \$12 (fifty shillings) per acre. This company allows easy payments extending over a period of six years. A very good selection of this company's land can be obtained in this settlement. An agent resides in Whitewood, who thoroughly knows the country and will drive intending purchasers out to see the lands.

The Hudson's Bay Company's Lands.—This Company offers two sections in every township for sale at from \$5 (twenty-one shillings) to \$7.50 (about thirty-one shillings) per acre. They also offer easy terms of payment extending over a period of eight years. Some good sections belonging to this Company are in this district and parties will be readily directed to them by the writer of this article.

Wild Lands, the property of private companies or of private individuals. About eighty farms in lots of not less than 160 acres each can be bought upon easy terms, viz:—ten per cent of the price in cash, and the balance in instalments to suit purchasers, the price per acre of these farms is from \$5 (£1) to \$6 (25 shillings). These farms are well suited for mixed farming, there is abundance of hay and water. The agent for this property lives at Whitewood.

Improved Farms.—Many of the pioneer settlers have re-homesteaded, consequently the first homestead is for sale. Others from causes they cannot control have to sell their farms. Amongst these there are some very cheap homesteads; they vary in price from \$500 (£100) to \$2,000 (£400) cash for the 160 acres, and when it is considered that an immi-

grant finds to his hand land cultivated, houses built, a well dug, etc., etc., the conclusion forces conviction that the improved homestead will bring back the quickest return. Nearly all the farms of the Whitewood district are best suitable for stock raising. Out of a list of about two dozen farms for sale the following description is a sample of them:—"Seven miles south of Whitewood railway station 160 acres in extent, new frame dwelling house with stone lined cellar, stable 60x18, grainery, 25 acres under cultivation, crop at valuation, pretty situation, groves of poplar on land, close to Pipestone River, price \$1000 (£200) cash, part can remain on mortgage."

The writer of this article will gladly correspond with any old country farmer desiring information on the North West, he has but one object, to build up the settlement which he has adopted as his home with a prosperous farming community. References can be made to the Hon. Edgar Dewdney, Lieut.-Governor of the North West Territories, Regina; the Lord Bishop of Qu'Appelle, St. John's College, Qu'Appelle; W. B. Scarth, Esq., M. P., Winnipeg; Alexander Begg, Esq., 88 Cannon street, London, England, or to the High Commissioner for Canada, Victoria Chambers, Westminster, London, England.

NOTE.—Read "Manitoba and the Great North West", by John Macoun, M. A.